

TPB Staff Director Report September 27, through October 19, 2007

The TPB staff would like to thank you all for the time and commitment you invested in making our September 27th retreat a success. Your willingness to attend additional briefings in preparation for that session and the energy you gave to the day helped us to move towards our goal of having a regional transit concept system by the end of the year. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated and was critical to the success of the retreat. I also ask you to join me in expressing our appreciation for the effort by our Consultant team, JJ&G in making the retreat a success. They have worked tirelessly, hand and hand with the staff and within our limited resources to help us reach our goal.

The October 25, 2007 meeting will again take the form of a “hands on” Board workshop instead of the regularly scheduled Planning & Funding and Operations and Oversight Committee meetings. In order to reach some agreement on a regional system planning concept by the end of 2007 we need to have another working session to further refine the concept plan. The goal is to try and gain a level of understanding and agreement by the Board on a draft regional transit system vision that we can begin sharing with the public and getting their feedback and support. Once the Board is comfortable with this concept the next action would be to start a fairly aggressive outreach and education effort to dialog with the public. At the October 25th meeting we would like to discuss the expectations for the public outreach effort. The October meeting will also include a presentation and discussion of information requested by the members of the Board small working group on funding (at their 10/3/07 meeting) on governance structures for our peer regions.

The time period since the retreat has been tremendously busy for the staff and our Consultant team. We have taken the input from the retreat and refined the two concepts presented at the retreat into a single regional transit network which we are calling Concept 3. In preparation for the October Board working session we will be briefing many of you on Concept 3 which we will present and discuss at the meeting on the 25th. A draft of materials on Concept 3 is included in your draft Board materials.

The MARTA Route 12 and Cobb Community Transit (CCT) Route 10 Open Door service coordination, one year demonstration project, is technically scheduled to end on November 26, 2007. Thus, before we start our working session on Concept 3 we will be providing you with an update on that project including the results of a customer survey conducted on both routes. The report will also include a brief update on other service coordination efforts the TPB has been working on with other regional transit service providers.

A letter thanking the TPB for its testimony at the Joint Senate and House Transportation Study Committee meetings is attached (Attachment 1). At their September 24, 2007 meeting in Atlanta, Chairmen Bell and Sam Olens spoke to the committee about what we have been doing in our region to coordinate transit and the importance of regional transit to the future of our region and State. Helen Tapp from our Consultant team provided an overview presentation of the technical work the TPB has been doing. The TPB also had an opportunity at their September 10th meeting in Valdosta where I presented an introduction to the TPB focusing on what we have been doing as a region to move us towards regional transit efficiencies and providing a general overview of what we discussed at our September 27th retreat.

Senator Doug Stoner has been working closely with us to coordinate our interface with the committee and has asked that the Board to meet with the committee in October or early November to discuss our regional transit vision plan.

The TPB/GDOT/MACOC study effort Consultant R.L. Banks Associates (RLBA) provided a draft of their report on Monday, September 17th. The study technical team made up of technical staff from GDOT, TPB, GRTA, MARTA and ARC met that same day to review the draft report with the Consultant team. The MACOC Steering Committee was briefed on the results of the report on October 9, 2007. An Executive Summary of that report is included as attachment 2. An overview of the report shows that based upon the updated cost and ridership numbers in comparison with peer cities, commuter rail is feasible to implement for our region. The report clearly recognizes that there will be tough issues and a great deal of uncertainty related to working with the railroads to operate in their rights-of way. The visiting Commuter Rail experts from Los Angeles, Dallas and Northern Virginia pointed out that the Consultant's report confirms that a decision to move forward with commuter rail should be based upon a long term transportation/mobility vision for the region and not solely on the numbers. The return on a Commuter Rail investment will be recognized over time. Based upon questions raised by the Steering Committee at their October 9, 2007 meeting and some additional requested analysis, the report will be further revised and is anticipated to be released in early November.

At the retreat we were able to share with you a limited number of the pocket size versions of the regional transit travel map. We are pleased and most grateful to Georgia Power for sponsoring the printing of the first 75,000 copies of our Regional Transit map. They have promised to have the remaining copies of the map done by early November. I will be meeting with other potential sponsors of a future updated version of the map this week to try and arrange sponsorship for the printing of an update of the map by spring of 2008.

At the request of Chairman Eaves, I did a brief presentation on the work of the TPB to the Fulton County Commission at their October 17th meeting. I had previously provided a similar update to the special MARTA task force of the Fulton and DeKalb Commissioners. The task force included Commissioners Darnell and Edwards from Fulton County and Commissioners Gannon and Johnson of DeKalb County. The task Force has agreed to continue to meet on a quarterly basis and to include the City of Atlanta. Both Commissions are considering resolutions stating their goals for future transportation funding. The Fulton resolution was passed at the October 17, 2007 meeting with concern voiced by Fulton Chairman Eaves that there must not be language in the resolution that would deter the regional effort towards integrated transit that the TPB has been working on during the past year. The discussion of the Commission on this issue stated that the language in the resolution is not mandatory but the concerns voiced needed to be considered in the funding plan being developed by the TPB. Thus, I recommend that the concerns expressed in that Fulton resolution become part of the process through which we develop a recommendation for regional transit governance and funding. A copy of that resolution is included as attachment 3 to this report.

A summary of activities for September 27 through October 19, 2007 includes the following:

- Continued ongoing regional service coordination efforts including coordination with GCT for improved service and open door policy along Buford highway and extension of service into the Clayton County serving the State Department of Revenue Tradeport facility and the Georgia International Convention Center;

- Solidified an agreement between regional operators and the SRTA for use of their 17th Street lot for a mid day bus layover location getting idling buses off the street and improving afternoon bus service reliability;
- Concluded outreach to paratransit user and advisory groups;
- Developed the initial pieces of the regional transit financial planning effort;
- Presented an update on TPB progress to ARC committees (TCC, TAQC and TSC) meetings;
- Presented an update on TPB progress to the GRTA Board Orientation meeting, Committee and Board meetings;
- Attended and presented at both the Valdosta and Atlanta meetings of the Joint House and Senate Transportation Study Committee;
- Attended the MACOC review meeting of the draft update report on Commuter Rail ;
- Attended the Get Georgia Moving Coalition meetings;
- Presented update information on the TPB to the MARTA Board Ad Hoc Committee;
- Briefed TPB Board members on draft regional system concepts;
- Briefed GDOT Intermodal and Planning Staff on draft system concepts;
- Conducted and documented the TPB retreat;
- Met with Joseph Bancoff concerning coordination for the master plan for Arts Center station and the woodruff Arts Center;
- Briefed the City of Atlanta Transportation Cabinet;
- Reviewed and commented on the draft MACOC Report updating Commuter Rail ridership and cost data;
- Participated in a panel on regional transportation issues for the "40 under Forty" future leaders group;
- Held second meeting with Board working group on funding;
- Served as a judge for the Clean Air Campaign Pace Awards;
- Met with Gwinnett Village CID to hear their concerns about regional transit vision;
- Served as a judge for the CCT hosted State bus rodeo; and
- Spoke at the monthly meeting of the Citizens for Progressive Transit.

Activities in Progress:

- Meet with potential sponsors for the future printing of an updated regional transit commuter map;
- Finalize draft report on regional coordination for paratransit services;
- Hold third meeting with Board working group on funding;
- Hold working session with Project Technical Committee;
- Brief Clayton County Commission on TPB efforts;
- Conclude Commuter Rail update study with the MACOC;
- Schedule follow up meeting with the Joint Senate and House Committee on Transportation Funding;
- Continue refinement of regional transit system plan;
- Finalize outline for public review and sharing of the regional transit plan vision; and
- Conclude and report out the results of TPB member interviews.